

REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 9-17, 19-21, and 23-31 remain pending. Independent Claims 1 and 20 are similar.

The amendments to Claims 1 and 20 better distinguish the claims over the combination of the prior art.

Claims 1 and 20 are amended to make clear that the first and second arrays of symbols on the separate screens are concurrently displayed on first and second sets of virtual reels. This is supported on page 6, lines 14-16, in the context of the specification, where the two screens are described as displaying “two reel games.” Claims 1 and 20 have also been amended to recite, “granting any award to the player for the first game based upon combinations of symbols displayed in the first game including the at least one special symbol.” This is supported at page 5, lines 1-9, in context with page 6, lines 14-16, and the remainder of the specification.

In Claims 1 and 20, a special symbol in a first array of randomly selected symbols on virtual reels in a first screen is shifted to another position in a second array of randomly selected symbols on a second set of virtual reels in a second screen, wherein the at least one shifted special symbol is combinable with the randomly selected symbols in the second array to form winning combinations of symbols. It is novel that two concurrently displayed reel-type games interact by the shifting of a symbol from one array to the other. The player can see the two games at the same time. This creates many new game possibilities and is respectfully submitted to be non-obvious. Playing two similar games concurrently has various advantages, such as using the same payable for both games, ease of understanding, consistent theme, consistent functions of symbols, etc. In the thousands of video slot machine games on the market, Applicant's have yet to see such a game where two similar reel-type symbol array games interact by symbols shifting between screens.

In the present Office Action, the examiner rejected at least independent Claims 1 and 20 as being obvious over the newly cited Webb (US 2002/0160828) in view of Visocnik (US 2004/0048646).

The amendment to Claims 1 and 20 is believed to clearly overcome the rejection.

The examiner cited **Webb** for teaching, with respect to Figs. 6-9, a 5x3 reel-type first array (all the S symbols), creating a main game, and five bingo cards (one for each reel) creating a secondary game 102. The bingo cards are displayed on the same screen as the reel-type game (the screen outline is shown around the reels and bingo cards). When a bingo marker shows up at one of the reel positions, that marker is placed at its assigned location on the bingo card for that column. When a certain marker arrangement (five markers across the card) is created on a bingo card, the player wins a bonus prize. Webb also teaches that the secondary game can be a tic-tac-toe game or a larger grid game using markers displayed alongside conventional symbols in the main game (Figs. 4-5). Race games, chess, and checkers are also taught as the secondary game, presumably also using markers displayed alongside conventional symbols in the main game (para. 0009). In all embodiments using some sort of shifting of markers to a secondary game, only the accumulation of the markers is relevant, since only the accumulated markers in a pattern or used to progress through a game are used to determine if the player wins a bonus prize.

Webb differs from amended Claims 1 and 20 in multiple aspects.

Firstly, Webb does not suggest the reels and secondary game are on different screens, although this is not Applicant's main argument for patentability.

Secondly, Webb does not suggest making the secondary game another reel-type game (similar to the main game) where the shifted special symbol is combinable with randomly selected symbols on virtual reels in a second array. In all of Webb's embodiments involving shifting symbols, Webb teaches that the accumulated markers (shifted from the main game) are used to play the secondary game. The markers are not combined with randomly selected symbols in a second array.

Thirdly, the claimed special symbol is also combinable with the other randomly selected symbols in the first array to grant an award for a winning combination of symbols, so the special symbols cannot just be Webb's marker that appears alongside a conventional symbol in Webb's reel-type main game, where the markers have no function in the main game.

The examiner admits on page 3 of the office action that "Webb et al. do not specifically disclose how the shifted symbol is combinable with symbols in an array of randomly selected symbols in the second game."

The examiner cites **Visocnik** for disclosing a special symbol (a wild symbol) that shifts randomly or in a predetermined pattern over an array of symbols and is combinable with the other symbols in the array. The examiner stated that it would have been obvious to "utilize the shifted symbol in combination with the second array of randomly selected symbols, thereby achieving the predictable result of providing possible award combinations to the player."

Visocnik discloses a moving wild symbol (e.g., a mouse) that moves around the same screen for each game in a free game session. The mouse does not shift between separate concurrently displayed games, since there is only one game displayed at a time.

The amendments to Claims 1 and 20 further distinguish the claims from any logical combination of Webb and Visocnik. There is no suggestion for modifying Webb to separately display two reel-type games and then the further modify Webb to include Visocnik's moving mouse over a single array, then further modify the combination to cause Visocnik's mouse to shift to a second array in a second screen showing a second reel game. Webb does not suggest that the secondary game is a second reel-type game, and Visocnik is strictly limited to a wild card (mouse) moving within a single array of symbols on a single screen.

Accordingly, since all other claims are dependent on Claim 1 or 20, all claims are respectfully submitted to be allowable.

If the examiner has any questions or would like further clarification of the claims, the examiner is requested to call Applicant's attorney at 408-382-0480 x202.

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Date of Signature

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